



**NANCY:** In this memoir, Erica Bauermeister weaves a lively commentary on the challenging adventures of renovating an old house. Her writing shines with wonderful phrases, connecting the pages of her life to the crazy experiences during their Port Townsend makeover. I enjoyed listening to the book while walking and cleaning, finding myself laughing aloud quite a few times.



**KATHARINE:** What a wonderful writer! I loved the way she wove her children and husband into the story in a very kind way, exploring the inevitable conflict gently, while being so humble about her own need to grow and change. A great book for English majors exploring the genre of memoir. Any young person that could follow in her footsteps will do well.



**PRISCILLA:** They really worked hard on that house, didn't they? I think it's a wonderful thing they did, bringing the old house back to its former glory with some new twists. I think the author is a very nice woman. I'd like to meet her. Ladies, let's plan a trip to the Olympic Peninsula! Seattle here we come!



**JANE:** Now here's an entrepreneur! Read between the lines. They made a fortune on this house. Real estate in that neck of the woods has skyrocketed in recent years. A wonderful place to enjoy an empty nest, an inheritance for their children. And you go, Erica! Way to do what you love and let the money follow. Kudos on your success! Reese Witherspoon's Sunshine Club, no less!



**MOLLY:** Hm. This book gave me pause to consider taking on an old house in retirement. But my husband, Tom, told me to relax and enjoy my second chance at life. I realize we're busy enough with our group homes, the FARM and the Sun House. But it might be fun... Maybe the Sun House guys could renovate a house and take it off the grid and we could help with decorating?



**ABIGAIL:** Loved this book written by a fellow pacifist. Did you catch that? I understand from reading about the author that she likes to write about ordinary experiences, making them important. She certainly makes them extraordinary with her well-crafted thoughts. To quote William Blake, "To see a World in a Grain of Sand, and a Heaven in a Wild Flower." Yes, that's what she does.

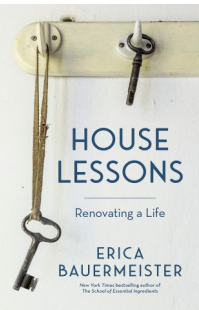


**SALLIE:** In this book you see how good it is for children to get experience alongside their parents. I loved when she invited them to release anger to demolish plaster. I loved how she pushed herself to allow her son to use the jackhammer and then how her daughter, Kate, followed in their footsteps, with her own husband, in spite of her mother's thoughts, like she once did herself.



# Discussion Guide

## About the Book



Title: House Lessons

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## Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Have you ever bought an old house and fixed it up? If so, how did your experiences compare to the author's? If you've never renovated an old house, did this book inspire you to do so? Why or why not?
3. How did the author weave her family relationships into the book? Do you think they would approve of her portrayals of them? Explain.
4. The author said it's important "to make those unimportant times in our lives beautiful." That's her goal in writing. In what ways does she accomplish this?
5. What lessons does she learn that help renovate her life?
6. How does involving their children in the house project work out? If you have children, have you engaged them in your projects? Talk about that.
7. Several times, the author talks about seemingly mystical experiences that happen. Like the roofers didn't come until she put the family time capsule in the wall. A tree trimmer showed up, just as she finished trimming the ivy. Have you ever had these sort of experiences? If so, how do you explain them?
8. Why did the author throw away her dissertation? How does she finally come into her own as a writer? What has been your own life dream? Have you been able to walk the path you hoped? Why or why not? If not, is it too late to try?
9. What do you think of her description of hoarding? To what extent are you a hoarder? Does this book help you think about that in new ways?
10. Read over the MAMs perspective on the book. With whom do you most agree and why?
11. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Listen to Alice Hoffman on YouTube: "Author Erica Bauermeister on HOUSE LESSONS: RENOVATING A LIFE" (18:04), "Interview with Erica Bauermeister" (3:04)